

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Dan Turner, (601) 576-2009;
dturner@governor.state.ms.us

Laura Hipp (601) 576-2020; lhipp@governor.state.ms.us

DATE: December 21, 2009

**GOVERNOR BARBOUR CREATES COMMISSION
TO REVIEW SCHOOL DISTRICT STRUCTURE**

***Education, legislative, business leaders will establish
method to consolidate districts***

Jackson, Mississippi – Governor Haley Barbour today announced formation of a special advisory commission to review Mississippi's current structure of public school districts and recommend how they can be consolidated in order to improve both the quality of education and the efficiency with which it is delivered.

The Commission on Mississippi Education Structure, created by Governor Barbour's executive order, will be chaired by Bancorp South Chairman and CEO Aubrey Patterson, of Tupelo, and members will include legislators,

education specialists, and business leaders. It is to make its recommendations by April 1, 2010.

“The state’s educational structure is a model of inefficiency with 152 school districts in only 82 counties,” Governor Barbour said. “By consolidating districts, we can make sure state and local tax dollars are spent on educating our students and increase the quality of educational opportunities for Mississippi’s children.”

Under the executive order, the commission will recommend how consolidation can best be achieved, and calculate the savings that would result from consolidation. The recommendation shall detail standards and priorities to be used by the State Board of Education in selecting those school districts to consolidate.

Although the Governor has recommended reducing the total number of school districts to 100, the order gives the commission authority to recommend consolidating to a

greater or lesser number of districts. The final report also may include recommendations on other ways to maximize educational quality while eliminating duplicative and wasteful administrative spending.

Members include: House Education Chairman Cecil Brown, Senate Education Chairman Videt Carmichael, Rep. Robert Johnson, Sen. Sampson Jackson, State Superintendent Tom Burnham, Institutions of Higher Learning Commissioner Hank Bounds, State Board of Education member Howell Gage, State Board of Education member and Pass Christian Superintendent Sue Matheson, Barksdale Reading Institute Claiborne Barksdale, Jackson businessman Socrates Garrett, Madison County Superintendent Mike Kent, South Delta Superintendent Katherine Tankson, Gulf Coast businessman Stephen Renfroe, Senate Universities and Colleges Chairman Doug Davis, and Rep. Herb Frierson.

###